

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the United States Mint Numismatic Coin Clarification Act of 2000. The Act operates to introduce a "technical correction" into the language of the Dollar Coin Act of 1997. The Act that we consider today, will permit us to achieve the purposes of the Dollar Coin Act by removing the requirement that newly minted dollar coins be composed of 90% silver and 10% copper. Instead, the silver/copper content requirement will apply only to half-dollar, quarter-dollar and dime coins. A dollar coin, minted in gold coloring with manganese-brass content will be included with the proof sets.

The Act also grants the Secretary of the Treasury the discretionary authority that he or she may exercise from time to time to mint and issue platinum bullion coins.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the United States Mint Numismatic Coin Clarification Act of 2000, instructs the Secretary of the Treasury to provide periodic reports to Congress that will set forth the general and per-unit costs of production, marketing, and distribution of each denomination of circulating coins.

I would add for the record that the maximum mintage of 1 million (1,000,000) silver proof sets contemplated by the Act is eagerly anticipated by the numismatic community and will be produced at the U.S. Mint in San Francisco.

Due to the need for the correction in the legislative language that would be enacted by passage of the United States Mint Numismatic Coin Clarification Act of 2000, I urge my colleagues to support this measure as well.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, the bill before the House today, introduced by request of the Treasury Department, is a simple technical corrections bill, and does just three things.

Most importantly, the Mint has sought language that would excuse it from law that requires it to make a silver "proof" version of the new golden one-dollar coin. It's obvious that it makes no sense at all to make a silver version of a coin that is golden in color, but language left over from the time when silver-colored Susan B. Anthony dollar coins were being made would require the all-silver "proof" version. Not having this clarification has held up the Mint's production of "proof" sets for collectors, and as it is illegal to produce coins in a year other than the one in which they are issued, failure to pass this bill would either result in a nonsensical "proof" set or no "proof" set for collectors at all this year.

Also contained in the bill is a clarifying section inserting the word "platinum," inadvertently dropped when Congress authorized the production of platinum and platinum bullion coins a few years ago, and a section calling for some increased reporting requirements on the Mint's costs of producing, distributing and marketing circulating coins.

This is a small bill, but important to the Mint and important to coin collectors. It has no cost implications whatsoever. I urge its immediate passage.

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5273.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ILLEGAL NARCOTICS AND DRUG ABUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for half the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to come before the House of Representatives on another Tuesday night to talk about one of the most serious problems facing our Nation and the American people and the United States Congress; and that is the problem of illegal narcotics and drug abuse.

I have taken probably more than 40 occasions, usually on a Tuesday, or at least once a week in the past year and a half plus to come before the House and talk about what I consider the most important social problem is facing our Nation. There is nothing bar an attack from a foreign enemy that could do more destruction or impose more tragedy upon this Nation than that problem of illegal narcotics.

I took the responsibility of chairing the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources of the House of Representatives under the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight some 18 months ago; and I took that responsibility very seriously.

I wish I could come before my colleagues tonight and say that we have solved this problem. I cannot as a parent tell my colleagues that we have solved this problem. I cannot as a Member of Congress tell my colleagues that we have solved this problem. I cannot tell my colleagues as the chair of this subcommittee that we have solved this problem. In fact, sometimes I think we make a step forward, and I think that we take a couple steps backwards.

The news, unfortunately, has been even more grim recently, and part of this, I think, is a lack of national leadership and national focus. Let us face it, the Clinton-Gore administration has not been interested in addressing the problem of illegal narcotics. It has not been one of their primary concerns.

In fact, the President of the United States, our leader, our Chief Executive only mentioned up until the passage of several months ago of the Colombia package, the war on drugs some eight times in 7 years. So it has not been in the vocabulary or part of the agenda of this administration.

I do not mean that as a partisan statement. It is a matter of fact. This administration came in with a different agenda, with a different approach. Now, some 7 plus years later, we see the results. This President has been looking for a legacy and this Vice President, his companion, have a legacy. That legacy is not printed by the media. The media will not print this story. But every family in America knows about this story.

There is almost not a family in this Nation today untouched by the ravages of illegal narcotics. Just ask one's son, one's daughter, just ask a young child, and they will tell one about drugs in their school, drugs on their street, drugs in the community. Just pick up any newspaper.

We have conducted dozens of hearings throughout the United States, field hearings and here in Washington; and countless law enforcement officials came in and told us that more than half the crimes, in my area 60, 70 percent of the crimes in my area, are related to illegal narcotics.

I held up some 2 years ago in 1998 this headline from Central Florida. And I come from one of the most beautiful areas of our Nation, a Nation that is very vast, a Nation that has a lot of diversity. I come from a district that is truly one of the blessed in the Nation with high employment, one of the highest educated populations, highest per capita income, all the things that any Member of this Congress would like.

This was the headline 2 years ago in my district: "Drug deaths top homicides." Drug deaths exceeded homicides in my district some 2 years ago. I was appalled by this. That was one of the reasons why I took on the assignment to chair the subcommittee that deals with our national drug policy.

I wished I could tell my colleagues that this headline was limited to Central Florida; but, Mr. Speaker, this headline has now spread across the Nation.

Last week I made an announcement, and the press did not pay any attention to it because they do not like to cover this story. They do not want to print anything that would reflect in any way badly on this administration.

□ 2300

But this is the legacy of the Clinton-Gore administration when it comes to the biggest social problem, the biggest problem that is imposing death, destruction, tragedy, sadness beyond belief to American families, and that is the problem of substance abuse and drug abuse.